

NEWSLETTER

Social Work in transition: what can we learn from Europe?

“What can we learn from Europe” is a pertinent question for today, and it was just this enquiry that fuelled the first training project launched by the ‘European Social Work Thematic Network: European Platform for World Wide Social Work’

Two days of seminars and workshops were held at the University of The West of England, Bristol, April 25th and 26th, to explore pan-European response to just such a question.. Hosted by Dr Liz Frost, Faculty Director of International Developments, and the social work programme, with Tony Benjamin (Barnardos, Bristol) and Nick Pike (The University of Gloucestershire) also lending support, the seminars offered the opportunity to get some answers straight from the horse’s mouth.

Lecturers from The Network and Socrates/Erasmus exchange partners were invited . Talks and workshops were contributed to represent the whole of Europe: from Eastern Europe (Julija Eidukeviciute, Lithuania; Dr. Nora Harkai, Hungary) Northern (Rauni Rati, Finland, Dr. Anita Kihlstrom, Sweden) Central (Prof. Dr. Gunther Friesenhahn and Prof. Dr. Gudrun Ehlert, Germany; Answin Weissenborn, Austria), Southern (Prof. Annamaria Campanini, Italy) and Western Europe (Prof. Ann Davis, Birmingham and staff from The University of the West of England and The University of Gloucestershire). Each offered their experience of how social problems in their particular country are addressed by social work services.



Workshop sessions and panel discussions gave the forty or so participants from social work practice, the student body, trainers and academics the chance to reflect on the similarities and diversities in European social work, and the mutual knowledge exchange such diverse experience offers.

For the UK, this was the first training project offered in relation to the membership of the ‘European Social Work Thematic Network: European Platform for World Wide Social Work’, As such it represented a massive learning experience across the board. Speakers offered access to understanding such issues as the change in family

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functioning in Lithuania since independence, contemporary youth work in Hungary, and the current policy on asylum seekers within the EU and in the UK. Additionally a plethora of workshops each offered at least two different European perspectives on various aspects of social work theory, policy, research or practice. With each day ending with an open panel discussion – ‘ask the European lecturers anything about their country’s social welfare’ - the amount of new learning available was stunning. A continuous knowledge exchange underpinned the whole two days.

The informal evaluations were fabulous; everyone was just so excited by the topics presented and about how so much diversity and so much similarity can exist at the same time in one continent.

As well as being a really important educational experience, it had two other major outcomes. It also offered lots of good new networking in the time spent together. The EUSW thematic network currently has a hundred members,

across every EU state, three of which came together in the Bristol area to play host to the workshops. However the more the better, and certainly there were potential members actually at the workshops, and interest generally was raised. The chances of making strong and far-reaching European connections for training and also for social work research and practice are there for the making.

The other important outcome of the two days of training workshops was offering the ‘training group’ of the network the chance to evaluate the project as a potential model – a pilot- for their future events.

Overall, then :- another success for the network: well done us!

Dr Liz Frost,
Principal Lecturer in Health and Social
Care/Faculty Director of International
Developments

REPORT FROM THE VIRCLASS PROJECT

A Task Force group in EUSW-TN

www.virclass.net

By ass.prof. Anne Karin Larsen, Bergen
University College

The VIRCLASS (The Virtual Classroom for Social Work in Europe) started as a result of the co operation in the EUSW-TN in 2003. Development of international e-learning courses in Social Work is one of the results of this project. During spring term 2005 two modules of totally 15 ECTS credits were arranged and students from 16 countries in Europe participated in the courses and communicated together on a common e-learning platform in the Virtual Classroom. Teachers from Wales, Spain, Austria, Portugal, Germany, Sweden, Norway and Lithuania were responsible for the content and supervision to students.

The e-learning courses and the Educational Programme SOCIAL WORK IN EUROPE were administrated by Bergen University College in co operation with Parma University. A third module was administrated as self-study and ended in a 16 days Summer School in Parma, July 2005.

From 2006 the
VIRCLASS
project will focus
on developing the



e-learning courses in a more flexible and by use of more virtual, and audio-visual elements. On the EUSW Board meeting in Berlin January 2006 there was made a decision that VIRCLASS will be a task force group in EUSW. This gives the project an autonomic status with it’s own budget, project plan and board – but with a close connection to EUSW to the best of both projects. VIRCLASS offer students from partner institution in EUSW the opportunity to take part in international comparative e-learning courses.

The VIRCLASS project are funded by Norway Opening University (NUV); Bergen University College and from 2006 also financial supported by Jønköping University and with some input from partner institutions.

Partners in the VIRCLASS project were together in Bergen from 2-5 February and worked out a reversion of the last Curriculum

Plan. The new plan will have the same two modules but the themes in module two have been slightly changed. The new curriculum plan will be competence based and the number of credits the same as in the former plan. New courses are planned to start in the middle of October 2006. However still more work has to be done. Creation and decisions have to be made for a new administrative and financial model for the courses. During the spring creation of elements for a Virtual Book will be worked out and lectures will be video recorded.

Next meeting will be in Austria in the middle of March 2006.

An important part of the VIRCLASS project is also dissemination of results and the project. The project has recently been presented at the Nordic FORSA conference in Helsinki,



Finland February 2006. Next presentation will be at the Netlearning conference in Sweden in May and probably at the EDEN conference in June this year.

For more and updated information go to www.virclass.net

INVITATION TO THE EDUCATIONAL
PROGRAMME
SOCIAL WORK IN EUROPE
15 ECTS CREDITS ONLINE COURSE

Information about curriculum plan and application
www.virclass.net

Deadline for application 1. September 2006
Courses starts: Module 1: 16 Oct 2006

Module 2: 23 Jan 2007

For more information contact:
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Or partners in VIRCLASS

The VIRCLASS partners continue to offer BA/Diploma students and professional social workers the opportunity to international co operation and learning in The Virtual Classroom for Social Work in Europe. The Programme is also open to students at post graduate level.

All partners (HEI) in EUSW will in the beginning of May receive pamphlets and information about the courses.

The opening of the first annual meeting of the network (27th till the 30th October 2005 at the University of Calabria, Campus Aracavacata, Cosenza Italy) by

ANNAMARIA CAMPANINI

One of the primary aims of the network is to develop a robust knowledge base on social work, service users, policy, practice and education across Europe. The network will begin with more than a hundred social work organisations represented and will seek to draw in many more as it progresses. These organisations will contribute knowledge from their geographical location and particular perspectives to under-pin this ever expanding

European data bank. The members of the network seek both to learn from each other's experience and practice and also generate new responses to problems of social exclusion and hardship. However the collective resource of pan-European knowledge of social problems and responses will also be available as a unique and invaluable resource to politicians, policy makers and other interested parties across Europe. This would serve to redress the cur-

rent absence of such an accessible and comprehensive resource for European policy makers to access up-to-date and reliable information. No methodical collection of such material seems to exist currently. The network aims to fill this gap. So far European Social Work has no particular platform to interface with the rest of the world. There are considerable advantages in cross fertilization of ideas and experience from Europe with developing and developed countries worldwide. The network aims to make links across this space and to launch forums where the European experience of working with social problems towards social inclusion and greater human rights can both inform and learn from the other continents. Within social work education across Europe, there is considerable inconsistency. Tuning initiatives in Europe have drawn attention to such difficulties. Drawing on this work, the network aims to work with other European bodies, such as the IASSW, IFSW (International Association of Schools of Social Work, International Federation of Social Workers) to develop core standards and principles applicable across the continent. Support can be offered to contexts in which social work education is undervalued with reference to accepted and improved core European standards. The sharing of experience in teaching and learning will benefit pan-European social work education and raise the standards of practice with vulnerable groups. Within the network building research for practice across Europe will be a central aim. Comparative research for practice projects will be established and knowledge generation and dissemination activities (such as conferences) will be undertaken both for and with practitioners, policy makers,

researchers, theoreticians and educationalists. The ambition to learn from and with all these groups will jointly dictate the form, agenda and content of such research and dissemination activities. The network aims to work across the traditional boundaries between theory and practice, research and service delivery, and between education and action within welfare. Equal valuing of all parts of the complex process of delivering good services is essential, and activities which will serve to facilitate greater homogeneity will be undertaken. Efforts are being made and will continue to be made to guarantee all sectors of the overall process within social work are represented.

The outputs of this thematic network will be:

- Training courses and professional development for social work actors
- International courses in social work for European students
- New proposals for international activity
- Series of publications on social problems and social policy/social work in Europe
- Research
- Textbooks on social work issues.
- A new website for EUSW-TN will be opened.
- Applying Tuning methodology



WORKING GROUP ACTIVITIES

GROUP 1 – Educational Opportunities



The group was formed at the Annual Meeting in Cosenza, Italy at the end of October. Their task is to arrange a number of training and educational events across the partnership countries. After discussion at the Annual Meeting we have agreed our immediate priorities. The Work Group is making an offer to any partner agency to submit a proposal for a training course for social work practitioners in their country. This will aim both to meet an identified training need in the country as well as to provide practitioners with a comparative European perspective on social work practice. Please see the attached document 'EUSW - Training Offer' for details. The Work Group is also inviting all partners to consider what specialist expertise they might have that could contribute to such a training course. Their aim is to offer a diverse selection of expert contributors to each training course. You are asked to think what specialist contribution you or your colleagues might be able to offer. Please see the attached document 'EUSW - Training Contributors' for details. The group is meeting again at the end of January to select the first events to be organized. We need you to respond by the end of January so that we can begin this process. Please send any replies to the group's contact person Julija Eidukeviciute at the following address: j.eidukeviciute@sdi.vdu.lt

GROUP 2 - Publications

The working group 2 - publication was formed in the 1st annual meeting of the SOCRATES-Network >European Platform

for a World-wide social work< held end of October 2005 in Cosenza /Italy. The working group publications consists of members from six European countries and is chaired by Günter J. Friesenhahn (Fachhochschule/ University of Applied Sciences K o b l e n z / G e r m a n y) (friesenhahn@fh-koblenz.de) (Tomaza Banez Tello) (tomasaba@posta.unizar.es) (Gaby Franger -Huhle) (franger@fh.coburg.de) (Vincenzo Fortunato) (v.fortunato@unical.it) (Mirka Necasova) (necasova@fss.muni.cz) (Ewa Kontowicz) (ewakan@uwm.edu.pl) Maria José Freitas (m.j .freitas@hszuyd.nl) In addition Nick Pike (GB) is willing to assist the group. In the 1st annual meeting, it was proposed to produce a book which has its focus in the essential changes in social welfare systems and in the organisation of social services in European countries. The work group has outlined a structure for a book with the working title: "Restructuring Social Welfare by the Exclusion of Social Work?"



In the meeting in Berlin (26th-29th January 2006) it was decided that Günter Friesenhahn, Vincenzo Fortunato and Ewa Kantowicz will be the editors of the book. The book will be published latest in February 2007. A further publication on >migration and different responses in European countries< has been drafted. On behalf of the group Gaby Franger - Huhle will write the call for abstracts for this book, which should be produced and published in 2007.

GROUP 3 - Information

At the meeting in Berlin in January 2006 we discussed the working plan and set up a new time schedule. Further-more we discussed the headlines of the current website and made some corrections and proposals for the coming soon new designed website. As a result of our discussions we formulated two letters /e-mails to all members and working group leaders. Deadline for the feedback related to the website: 15th February Deadline for the feedback related to the newsletter: 15th March Beatrice and Alessia will work out a layout for the newsletter in February. The texts, articles shall be proofread in March by Bob Sanders. In the beginning of April WG 3 will meet in Parma and come to final decisions about the first issue of the newsletter, the procedures for the printed version (where to print, budget, number). And we will talk about procedures related to the website with Alessandro Bernazzoli and the technical staff.



Alessia Colarusso

alessia.co@gmail.com - University of Trieste - Italy (new Working Group Member)

Beatrice Rovai

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Gudrun Ehlert: ehler@htwm.de - Hochschule Mittweida

GROUP 4 – Web Enhancement and ODL Group

The Board of the network took first a decision about the position of this working group. Because of its members, this working group is strongly related to the 'Virclass'project. But ODL is wider than e-learning. Therefore the Board asked the working group to reconsider

her task. The working group sees herself now first as facilitating. Therefore we made a questionnaire to get more information of the use, knowledge, experiences and possibilities at the different schools, universities and organizations. About 50 people filled in this form at the meeting in Berlin. The mailing afterwards to the organization who were not represented was not so effective. Only 2 questionnaires returned. If you haven't filled in this form, than we request you to do this. In May the working group will analyze the information, and give its ideas about the future plans.

The working group has at the moment 4 members. We are still looking for new people.! Klas Göran Olsson, Anne Karin Larssen, Ove Mølvadgaard, Rem-melt Veenkamp

GROUP 5 - Meetings and conferences

Liz Frost, from the core board, visited Ewa Kantovicz in Olsztyn Poland, as the advance party for the annual meeting. The University of Warminsk Mazurski looks like a great venue for October 2006. The city has fantastic facilities including great shops and restaurants and a pretty old town. Around Olsztyn the countryside is gorgeous, if you have time to add some days it would make a lovely peaceful break. The University itself is inspiring. The planning for the meeting is coming on well we will have really productive and stimulating time. The next newsletter and the website will carry full details.

GROUP 6 - Networking and International Development

Four series of activities have been planned:

- Promoting new partnerships EUSW/Global Establishing a mini-network in EUSW for institutions offering classes in English
- Planning a seminar/workshop on funding, to take place during the Annual Meeting in Poland in October
- Developing information on international organisations/NGO's providing funding related to social work activities

During the meeting we collated the

information on international partnerships (outside the EU) received from members of EUSW during the preceding 3 months. Since the meeting I've received further information from 4. EUSW members, about their English language social work programmes. Jan Agten and Aino Kiis will be responsible for planning the seminar/workshop on funding. They cannot proceed however, until we have more information from the Core Founder group about funding for this activity. Can we employ a professional or are we expected to do this with our own (limited) resources?



The current list of WG 6 members:

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GROUP 7 - Research Opportunities

Submitted to: the EUSW European Platform for World Wide Social Work, regarding the Annual meeting which took place from the 27th till the 30th October 2005 at the University of

Calabria, Campus Aracavacata, Cosenza Italy.

Participants: Maria Michailidis (**Leader**) Dick Herweg (**Liaison**) Gerald Moussu, Gabriella Ciot, Jose Maria Moran Carrillo, Francesca Ruozi, Silvia Fargion (absent)

During the 28th October, 2005

the second day of the meeting, all EUSW participants were asked to joint and try out a Work Group. An amazing number of participants tried out Work Group 7 (WG 7). The initiative was taken by my self to coordinate this group meeting.

At first the chance was given to each participant to introduce themselves and the University/ College or Institution they represented. Then the "role" of WG 7 was clarified to the participants, is being:

The primary role of WG 7 is to generate research activities within the net work and to harness existing research projects. Additionally it will seek funding sources and network with national and international research bodies. Must in year one to two research publications in English, providing a research workshop.

The next step was to brainstorm on research opportunities-expectations that the participants had related to SW: **these were centered around the following topics:**



Comparative studies/
research
Social exclusion
European Immigration
Ethics
Social Policy Cross Cultural studies
Evaluation of SW (link with CERTS)
Social representation
Spirituality.

Also the methodology preferred:
Qualitative Cross cultural

Comparative Debate on General and

Specific research on: Organizational Culture,
Social Impact of different factors on Psychopathology,
Models of residential care (child care).

During the 29th October, 2005 the third day of the meeting, all EUSW participants were asked to finally decide which work group they would like to work with. This time around the group ended up with 7 participants, who has several tasks to accomplish these being:

To set up activities to carry on for the first year - connected with the output. Select a leader
Select a liaison Think of a work plan After a long discussion the group decided on the following two aims Aims:

1. To create a data base on present, current and future SW research. The method for data collection would be a Questionnaire. Once this is constructed by the group it would be sent to all participants by mid December
2005 Data analysis and meeting scheduled for the end of January
2006 The write-up of the report will be done at the scheduled January meeting.
2. On the basis of the collected data, the

proposals for two research projects will be written for the next year. Another task of the group was to select a Leader and a Liaison person, thus the group selected Maria Michailidis (**Leader**) and Dick Herweg (**Liaison**).

Thus the group during the month of November 2005, worked on construct-ing the Questionnaire. The question-naire was piloted the first week of December 2005. After several correc-tions were made, an updated question-naire was ready, and then it was sent to all EU SW participants via Loredana Gianolini at the University of Parma. A reminder was sent the second week of January 2005, to all participants for completing the questionnaire. The collected questionnaires will be statistically analyzed with an EXCEL program and the report will be written during the Berlin 2006 meeting, New members are now expressing their interest in joining WG7, thus the dynamics of the group will be altered the next time we meet. An updated report will be written up after the Berlin meeting.
Dr. Maria Michailidis, Group Leader.
INTERCOLLEGE, NICOSIA CYPRUS

EDITORIAL

Dear Readers,

with this first edition of our newsletter we want to inform you about the work of the thematic Network "EUSW European Platform for Worldwide Social Work". We will put in the picture what happened since the start of the network in October 2005. The working groups will be introduced, a report from a joint conference in Bristol (United Kingdom) in April 2006 and reports from VIRCLASS give you an impression about the network activities. Alessia Colarusso, Beatrice Rovai and Gudrun Ehlert have been editing this newsletter. We are members of the working group 3 (information), which is responsible for disseminat-ing news within the network. We had various difficulties in doing so - some of them technical - some of them human. We hope that this first edition inspires all readers from inside and outside the network for further cooperation and contribution. The second newsletter shall be edited in the end of September 2006. We kindly ask you to write articles about the network activities and send them to us. And we hope to see many of the network participants at the **2nd Annual Meeting from 19th - 21st October 2006 at the University of Warminsk Mazurski in Olsztyn (Poland) - "Role of research in social work education in Europe"**. Further information you will find on the new EUSW-website: <http://www.eusw.unipr.it>. Please send all articles, news etc which you want to have published in the next newsletter to: Gudrun Ehlert ehlert@htwm.de. A relaxing summer time to all readers!!!

Alessia Colarusso, Beatrice Rovai and Gudrun Ehlert